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Disarmament Commission
247th meeting
Friday, 27 April 2001, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Ms. Quarless ..... (Jamaica)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Reports by Chairpersons of Working Groups

The Chairperson: We will start the final meeting of the 2001 substantive session with agenda item 6, namely, the adoption of reports of the subsidiary bodies on the various agenda items, as well as consideration and adoption of the draft report of the Commission, as contained in documents A/CN.10/2001/CRP.2, CRP.3 and CRP.4/Rev.2. In accordance with our agreed working timetable, we will first consider and adopt the report of the Commission and thereafter hear concluding statements by delegations.

To start the process of the consideration and adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies on individual agenda items, I would like to call on the Chairpersons of each Working Group to introduce the report of his or her group.

If there are no comments about this procedure I shall proceed to give the floor to the Chairman of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", the representative of Ghana, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei, to introduce the report of this Working Group, which is contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.3.

Mr. Osei (Ghana), Chairman of Working Group I: In my capacity as the Chairman of Working Group I, it gives me great pleasure to present to the Disarmament Commission this morning the draft report of Working Group I, on agenda item 4, entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament". This report, which is before the Committee, is contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.3/Rev.1 and is dated 26 April 2001.

Working Group I held a total of 10 meetings, during which it exchanged views both orally and in writing and heard proposals and comments on all the papers that I submitted, namely, a revised non-paper, a draft structure of the outcome document, a compilation of the comments and proposals and, finally, a Chairman's working paper based on the aforementioned compilation that also took into consideration the written and oral submissions. I must also mention that a number of delegations presented working papers as well. Those are listed in paragraph 2 of CRP.3/Rev.1.

While I am happy to report that the texts of the Chairman's paper will be the basis of our work next year, I emphasize that it has been issued on my sole responsibility and does not in any way represent a negotiated position or command any consensus. But, reflecting on the Group's deliberations over the past three weeks, I believe we have made some progress, albeit step by step. In my view, this should hardly be surprising, given the nature of the subject matter that we have considered and the desire to ensure that any distances gained are well measured and well covered.

I believe the draft report speaks for itself and therefore needs no further clarification or explanation. Suffice it to add that, as agreed in paragraph 8 of the draft report, my inter-sessional consultations, which will precede the revision of my paper, will be based on

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the preliminary comments that were made during our first reading by delegations.

In this regard, I am also sensitive to the fact that there have been inquiries about the timing of the release of the revised paper. At this stage, I can say only that I shall endeavour to have it issued in reasonable time before the 2002 session of the Disarmament Commission.

Judging from the reactions of delegations, which I took note of after our meeting yesterday, the Group's work next year will be challenging. Indeed, I am reminded of the conversation between the hen and the pig. As I recall the story, in response to the hen's proposal that they have eggs and bacon for breakfast, the pig said, "For you, it is a matter of just laying the eggs; for me, it is a matter of life or death". Negotiation will always be hard. But it will also remain the art of demonstrating flexibility to reach compromises that are not life-threatening.

Having said that, nothing remains for me to do but to thank all delegations, not only for their presence at our meetings but also for their constructive comments, which facilitated the Group's work.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the officers of the Secretariat, notably Mr. Timur Alasaniya of the Disarmament and Decolonization Organs Servicing Branch of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, who served as Secretary of the Working Group. I must also mention Ms. Tatyana Shestakova and Ms. Lidija Komatina, of the same Branch, whose assistance was invaluable in that regard. I should also like to mention Ms. Mika Murakami and Mr. Valére Mantels of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, who served as advisers to the Group.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Secretariat staff of the documentation room and desk, who ensured that all the relevant documents and papers were available and easily accessible to delegations. I thank them for their courtesy and friendliness. Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge the quiet but effective presence of our language interpreters, who are unseen but heard, and who made it possible for us to understand each other as we worked. On behalf of the Working Group, I wish to commend them for their support.

Finally, Madam, your election as Chairperson provided an opportunity for me to strengthen the working relations that I have had with you in the past. Working with you was, indeed, my pleasure.

The Chairperson: I thank the representative of Ghana for his report.

If there are no comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group I on item 4, as contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.3/Rev. 1.

The report was adopted.

The Chairperson: I would now like to move on to the report of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", as contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.4/Rev.2.

I give the floor to the Chairperson of Working Group II, Mrs. Gabriela Martinic, representative of Argentina, to introduce the report.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the report of Working Group II on agenda item 5, entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms". The report is contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.4/Rev.2.

Working Group II held 11 meetings between 11 and 26 April. During that period, after a general exchange of views, it considered the non-paper I presented on 16 March. It also held a preliminary exchange of views on possible recommendations.

As reflected in paragraph 4 of the report, delegations made numerous and valuable oral and written proposals, and three working papers were presented. The delegation of Nepal has informed me that it has presented a working paper, which is being distributed, as stated earlier in the Committee of the Whole.

Working Group II also had the opportunity to hear an enlightening presentation by Mr. Nazir Kamal of the Department for Disarmament Affairs regarding the activities carried out by that Department and its regional centres on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms and indications of possible future tasks that might be entrusted to them. That presentation will certainly contribute to the

formulation by the group of practical recommendations, as has been requested.

Finally, the Working Group's report, adopted by consensus yesterday, mentions the work that delegations and I will have to carry out before the start of the 2002 substantive session of the Commission.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to all delegations for their active and constructive participation. Our work took place in an excellent atmosphere of openness and mutual respect, even when opinions differed on various aspects. It is my profound hope that at the end of our three-year cycle, Working Group II on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms will be in a position to make a small but nonetheless important contribution to a better understanding and comprehension among us all.

Before concluding, I should like to express my gratitude to Mr. Nazir Kamal, Mr. Saijin Zhang and Ms. Shenaz Nagji for their efficiency, professionalism and great patience with me, as at times I have been a little tense and anxious. I should also like to acknowledge the interpreters and conference officers for their cooperation, friendliness and helpful attitude. I should like thank the members of the Secretariat for their assistance in facilitating our work, especially the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, and his assistant Ms. Lidija Komatina, who, year after year, provide us with their tireless assistance and experience. My thanks also go to the other members of the Bureau for their encouragement and confidence in my work.

Finally, I should like to express to you, Madam, my admiration and pride — admiration for your diplomatic skills in conducting our work with a firm hand and a constant smile, and pride because through you our region has once again demonstrated its continuing contribution to bringing about the world imagined by those who wrote the Charter, the world of which we continue to dream.

The Chairperson: I thank the representative of Argentina for her report, for her very kind words to me and for her continued support throughout the past three weeks.

Does any delegation wish to comment on the report of Working Group II?

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): My delegation wishes to express its pleasure that the promise has been kept to distribute document A/CN.10/2001/WG.II/WP.3, a working paper entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", by my delegation. As that document is valuable for all delegations, I wanted to flag the point that the venue of the four important meetings devoted to confidence-building measures that were organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific was Kathmandu, which is the headquarters of the Regional Centre.

The Chairperson: In the absence of any further comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt the report of Working Group II, on agenda item 5, contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.4/Rev.2, as orally amended.

The report, as orally amended, was adopted.

The Chairperson: Now that we have adopted the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, I would like to thank the Chairs of the two Working Groups for their stewardship. The Commission is deeply indebted to them for their exemplary leadership in guiding the deliberations of the Working Groups on two very complex issues. I am particularly gratified at the support they have extended to the Chair of the Commission over the past three weeks.

We will now begin our consideration of the draft report of the Disarmament Commission, as contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.2. I have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Rapporteur of the Commission, Mr. Ko Ko Shein of Myanmar, to introduce the draft report of the Commission.

Mr. Shein (Myanmar), Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission: It is my honour and distinct pleasure to introduce to the Disarmament Commission the draft report of the Commission at its 2001 substantive session, as contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.2. The draft report consists of four chapters: "Introduction", "Organization and work of the 2001 substantive session", "Documentation" and "Conclusions and recommendations".

Let me now turn to the text of the draft report and draw the attention of delegations to section III B, "Other documents, including documents submitted by Member States". A new paragraph will be inserted

following paragraph 23 in the light of the submission of working paper A/CN.10/2001/WG.II/WP.3.

As customary, the final draft report is a factual description of the Commission's work and proceedings during the session. The substantive part comprises the reports of the two Working Groups, which were just adopted by the Commission and which will form part of the present draft report. This part is a reflection of compromises and agreements reached by delegations through delicate negotiations carried out in a spirit of constructive cooperation.

On agenda item 4, "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", I would like to say that dialogue on this complex issue took place within the context of the Disarmament Commission. The Commission, with its deliberative mandate, allows practical and action-oriented considerations, as well as broad expectations and conceptual approaches to the issue.

On agenda item 5, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", the Chairperson presented a non-paper to which delegations, in the course of their deliberations, contributed actively.

The reports of the two Working Groups, although not to the full satisfaction of delegations, will certainly serve as a basis for further discussions.

I wish to take this opportunity to say that it has been a privilege and an honour for me to serve as Rapporteur at this session, and particularly to work under the able leadership of our Chairperson, Ms. Diane Quarless. It was an enriching experience to participate in the work of the Bureau together with the Vice-Chairmen and the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, who provided effective and expert guidance for our deliberations.

Finally, allow me to extend my gratitude to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for the counsel and support that he provided to the Bureau and to member States. I would also like to express my special thanks to the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, to the secretaries of the Working Groups, and to all the other members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts and kind assistance as we worked towards a successful conclusion of the 2001 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

With those brief remarks, I have the honour to recommend that the Commission adopt the draft report as contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.2.

The Chairperson: Now we shall consider the draft report of the Commission, chapter by chapter.

As there are no comments on Chapter I, "Introduction", paragraphs 1 and 2, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt those paragraphs.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 were adopted.

The Chairperson: We turn next to Chapter II. Are there any comments on Chapter II, "Organization and work of the 2001 substantive session", paragraphs 3 to 13?

Mr. Salander (Sweden): I regret that I did not spot this earlier, when we went through the draft report informally, and I shall not insist on this amendment. But let me direct attention to paragraph 7, and suggest that we use the same formula there as we used in the various working papers:

> "Sweden (on behalf of the European Union, with the associated countries aligning themselves)".

The Chairperson: Paragraph 7 will be so amended.

As there are no further comments, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to adopt paragraphs 3 to 13 as orally amended.

Paragraphs 3 to 13, as orally amended, were adopted.

We will now take up Chapter III, "Documentation", paragraphs 14 to 24. Are there any comments on this chapter?

Delegations are invited to note that with the insertion of the new text reflecting the submission of the delegation of Nepal, the final paragraph, 24, becomes paragraph 25, and acknowledgement of Nepal's contribution is inserted as paragraph 24.

As there are no further comments, I will take it that the Commission wishes to adopt Chapter III, paragraphs 14 to 25, as orally amended.

Paragraphs 14 to 25, as orally amended, were adopted.

Delegations are now invited to comment on Chapter IV: "Conclusions and recommendations", paragraphs 26 to 29. Delegations should take note that the numbering of paragraphs in this chapter is amended to be consistent with the changes in the previous chapter.

As there are no comments, I will take it that the Commission wishes to adopt Chapter IV, paragraphs 26 and 29, as orally amended.

Paragraphs 26 and 29, as orally amended, were adopted.

Having adopted all paragraphs on the draft report, may I take it that it is the wish of the Commission to adopt the draft report of the Commission, contained in document A/CN.10/2001/CRP.2 as a whole, as orally amended?

The draft report, as orally amended, was adopted.

Concluding statements

Mrs. Arce de Jeannet (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to say a few words, on behalf of the Mexican delegation, to express our satisfaction with the progress made at this session of the Disarmament Commission on the two substantive agenda items. We hope that constructive dialogue will be pursued during the intersessional period to enable us to make considerable progress in the pending work of both Working Groups.

I wish to say a few words on behalf of the delegations of Latin America and the Caribbean present, to express our deepest appreciation for the manner in which the work has been guided by you, Madam Chairperson, and by the two Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, and to express our thanks for the assistance given by the Secretariat, both from the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. We would like our appreciation recorded at this session.

Mr. Sharma (India): Greetings to you, Madam Chairperson, and to the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups for the manner in which you have conducted the proceedings this session. Considerable work has been done towards identifying the issues concerned and seeking common ground, while differences remain to be reconciled and more work is required before we can come to documents that might enjoy consensus.

My delegation's undiminished commitment to nuclear disarmament will continue to guide participation in the Working Group on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. At the same time, it will also be guided by the need for non-discriminatory and equitable measures that are in keeping with the United Nations Charter, which recognizes the sovereign equality of all its Members.

Our working paper and subsequent written submission on unilateral measures taken by India in nuclear disarmament will be adequately reflected, we hope, in the outcome document. It goes without saying that flexibility and understanding from all sides would be needed to reach agreement on a document that should add to the credibility of the Disarmament Commission.

The Working Group on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms has made considerable progress since the last session, and we now have a document which forms a basis for further work. It outlines the principles and characteristics of the confidence-building measures and attempts to provide practical examples that States or regions may choose to apply on a voluntary basis, taking into account the particular characteristics in each case. The outcome document should naturally avoid being prescriptive in any manner and should respect the sovereign right of each State to judge the situation and to decide freely as to which examples would be appropriate or inappropriate for a given context.

My delegation hopes that during the intervening period the two documents will be further evolved to pave the way for decisive action at the next session of the Disarmament Commission. We shall be ready to participate in any intersessional consultations and will, where necessary, provide written submissions to spur the process. If we succeed in our efforts, that will redound to the credit of this forum, which has a well-articulated and specific role in the multilateral process of disarmament.

Mr. Mohammed (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Arab States members of the League of Arab States and on the occasion of the conclusion of the first substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 2001, my delegation wishes to extend

its thanks and gratitude to you, Madam Chairperson, and to the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, Ms. Martinic and Mr. Osei, for all the efforts deployed in conducting our consultations in an atmosphere of harmony and flexibility. I also wish to thank all the delegations that have made useful, substantive suggestions during our meetings.

I cannot fail to extend thanks to the Secretariat and to all who have helped to facilitate our task and provided us with the various services, including documentation, and in particular the translation and interpretation services, for all their important efforts.

The States members of the Arab League also express their readiness to continue to cooperate with you, Madam, in the inter-sessional period and in providing you with suggestions for discussion on which we may achieve consensus on the guidelines for the next session's debates.

My delegation sincerely hopes that the same atmosphere of understanding and flexibility will prevail next year so that we may achieve consensus on the different issues related to disarmament in this Commission, the primary body for discussing the most important issues of nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Pham Binh Minh (Viet Nam): I have the great honour to speak on behalf of the delegations of the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to express our deepest thanks to you, Madam, for your excellent manner of conducting the meetings of the Commission this year.

We should also like to express our appreciation for the dedicated efforts of the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei, and of the Chairperson of Working Group II, Mrs. Gabriela Martinic. The ASEAN countries are very thankful for the contribution made by Mr. Timur Alasaniya, the Acting Secretary of the Commission, and other members of the Secretariat for their facilitating role and contribution.

We should also like to thank Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his counsel and contribution.

Finally, we would like to thank the conference officers, the interpreters and translators for their services, without which our Commission could not have concluded its work in such an excellent manner.

Mr. Du Preez (South Africa): In addition to the words of appreciation already expressed by other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, permit me, on behalf of the Movement and other States associated with it, to express our deep appreciation to you, Madam, whose country is a fellow member of the Movement, for the professional manner in which you guided the work of the Commission during this session. Your willingness to take up the chairmanship of the 2001 session, your particular style, positive approach and the friendly manner in which you conducted your tasks have set an example to all delegations. We trust that the good spirit in which you have guided us during this session will continue next year.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to the two Chairpersons of the Working Groups, Mr. Osei and Mrs. Martinic, for the commitment and encouragement they have shown in their respective Working Groups. The preparation of the working papers that should form the basis of next year's session of the Commission should guide us through our work in the inter-sessional period. On behalf of the Movement, I wish to encourage them to continue their work in the inter-sessional period and to guide us towards a successful conclusion of our work in both Working Groups.

I would also like to thank the members of the Bureau; the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, and his staff; the Acting Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Alasaniya; the respective Secretaries of the Working Groups; and other supporting staff for their important role in assisting delegations in our deliberations at this session.

Finally, but not least, we would also like to thank the interpreters and translators, who have been essential to the Commission's work.

Mr. Li Genxin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, I should like to express our sincere gratitude to you, Madam. We greatly appreciate your tireless efforts to ensure the success of this session.

I also wish to thank Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his efforts at this session.

We also wish to thank the two Chairpersons of the Working Groups, the representatives of Ghana and Argentina, for their fruitful efforts in guiding the negotiations on the items on our agenda and for their tireless work in the Working Groups.

Generally speaking, the work done at this session has been very useful. Members of the Commission have held in-depth discussions on confidence-building measures and the ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. We have taken stock of our achievements and progress and made proposals for future deliberations. We seek peace and development, which are the common aspirations of the international community and which represent the current trend in the international arena.

However, in the field of international security, there remains some potential danger. The cold-war mentality and power politics have not disappeared. Practices that damage regional security continue to be followed and tensions still exist, while practices interfering with the internal affairs of States persist. The Chinese delegation believes that security is mutual and indivisible. We need to proceed on the basis of the principles of mutual trust and mutual benefit, conducting negotiations and dialogue on an equal footing. Only through such an approach can we truly maintain peace and security.

The Chinese delegation believes that the positive role of the Commission in laying down the principles of nuclear disarmament and in international arms control is irreplaceable. In the present situation, efforts must be made further to strengthen its role in that regard.

The Chinese delegation will, in a constructive manner, make its contributions to the work of this Commission.

Mr. Gosal (Canada): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, my delegation would like to thank you, Madam Chairperson, for all of your efforts and for the professional manner in which you have carried out your work. We would also like to thank the Chairman of Working Group I, Mr. Yaw Odei Osei of Ghana, and the Chairperson of Working Group II, Mrs. Gabriela Martinic of Argentina, for their efforts and hard work. I would also like to acknowledge the vital work done and the assistance provided by the Bureau and the Secretariat, namely, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the interpreters.

The Chairperson: The weeks have passed swiftly, and we have already arrived at the close of the 2001 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. The task we set ourselves was not an easy one, for the issues which the Commission currently has under consideration are fundamental and critical to meaningful advancement of the disarmament agenda in both the nuclear and conventional fields.

I believe it is fitting that we have begun the new millennium with a commitment to explore new ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and to develop practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. It sets the bar high for future action in pursuit of a strengthened regime for the enhancement of international peace and security. I am confident that if we can find our way to common ground on the scope and applicability of these measures, then we will have made a significant contribution towards refocusing our agenda and revitalizing debate and negotiation on the range of issues that remain a challenge in the field of disarmament.

The working paper on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament — which was introduced by the Chairman of Working Group I, the representative of Ghana — is in my view a good synthesis of the many facets of this issue. It builds on the Chairman's non-paper introduced at the beginning of this session, drawing on the Chairman's compilation of proposals, comments and oral and written submissions from delegations. While it is not a negotiating text, it attempts to present in a realistic way the achievements and current developments in the field of nuclear disarmament. It also acknowledges the work that still remains to be done.

The non-paper on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms — which was introduced by the Chairperson of Working Group II, the representative of Argentina — remains a sound basis for deliberation and future discussion. If the Commission will allow, I will cite a few statements on confidence-building measures (CBMs) contained in that non-paper, which I exhort Member States to keep in mind always as we grapple with the difficult issues on this agenda.

"The ultimate goal of CBMs in the field of conventional arms is to strengthen international peace and security and to contribute to the prevention of war.

"Confidence-building requires a consensus among the States participating in the process.

"By helping to create a climate in which the importance of the military element is gradually diminished, CBMs could in particular facilitate and promote the process of arms limitation and disarmament."

Such is the noble ideal which we to pursue through confidence-building measures.

I am sure delegations agree that the working paper of the Chairman of Working Group I and the non-paper of the Chairperson of Working Group II form a sound basis for the future work of the Commission. Make no mistake: there is still much to be done, and the task ahead of us for the coming session is a challenging one. However, if we continue to use to the fullest the opportunity for dialogue that this deliberative body offers, and if we can maintain the atmosphere of cooperation and goodwill that characterized this session, then I am confident that somehow we will find our way forward. To this end, I encourage wide participation in inter-sessional consultations as we prepare for the final consideration of these subjects next year.

In closing, I wish again to thank all delegations for the opportunity to serve as Chairperson of the Disarmament Commission at this substantive session. It was a great honour both for me and for my country, and I have emerged with a renewed respect for the important role that this specialized deliberative body can play in promoting consensus-building and in strengthening the framework for the enhancement of international peace and security.

I wish to express my gratitude to all delegations for their constructive spirit and the support extended to me and the members of the Bureau, who helped to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the smooth conduct of this session of the Commission. To them I am particularly thankful.

I wish also to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his active interest in the work of the Commission and for his invaluable counsel to me and the Bureau, as well as to delegations.

The Chairperson is also indebted to the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Timur Alasaniya, the Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Cheryl Stoute, the secretaries of the Working Groups and the staff of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their invaluable support in facilitating the work of the Commission. May I also express the Commission's appreciation to the interpreters, the conference officers and the documents officers for their assistance during the session.

To those delegations leaving New York, I wish you very safe travel home.

Closure of the session

The Chairperson: I declare closed the 2001 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.